

# Lest We Forget: Rifleman John Brooks, 1898-1917

The 1914-1918 War was a truly global conflict and Marlow men fought, and died, in many different parts of the world. This is the story of Rifleman John Brooks who died fighting in Palestine in April 1917.

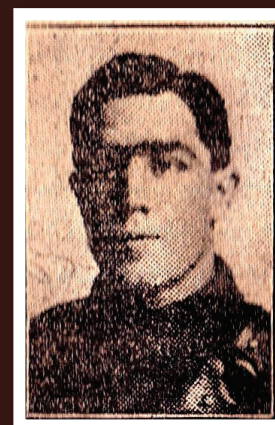
## John's early life

John Thomas Brooks was born in 1898, the elder son of Walter and Mary Brooks who lived in Dean Street, Marlow. He worked as a gardener in Marlow until war broke out in summer 1914. Although he was only 16 years old and therefore under age for active service, John enlisted in the Isle of Wight Rifles in February 1915. Many men and boys from South Buckinghamshire joined this regiment, attracted by the £1 signing-on bonus that was being offered by the recruiting officer who knew the area well.

## The Palestine Campaign

John was sent to Egypt where he fought in the Gallipoli campaign in 1915, before being invalided out with dysentery. After recuperating in hospital in London, he rejoined his regiment in January 1916 and took part in the Palestine campaign.

In February 1917, John was appointed as batman to Captain Vincent. On 19 April, the Isle of Wight Rifles were involved in action to take the city of Gaza from the defending Turkish forces. During the action, Captain Vincent was wounded, first in the hand and then in the head. John was bandaging the Captain's wounds when he was himself shot and killed instantly. He was just 19 years old. Of the 800 men from the regiment who started the action, only 2 officers and 90 men answered the roll call that evening. Among those killed that day were six men from Little Marlow.



Rifleman John Brooks

John is commemorated on the Jerusalem Memorial, the regimental memorial in Newport, Isle of Wight and on the memorial in All Saints' Church, Marlow. Captain Vincent survived the fighting and later wrote to John's parents, saying that he had died 'a soldier's death' and that the Captain had lost a 'true friend and comrade'.



Jerusalem Memorial where Rifleman John Brooks is commemorated.



The ruins of Gaza 1917